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## THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### I

#### HISTORY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Foreign language teaching has never produced very satisfactory results in terms of turning out students who can communicate with speakers of the target language. Charles Carpenter Fries once described the result of most foreign language teaching as a low level of translation.

Historically the source of the inadequacy of language teaching was the importance that was given to Latin until recently. Even when no one could any longer argue that Latin was necessary for scholarly work, or as the sign of gentleman, it held its place in the curriculum as a mental discipline, or as a device for vocabulary building. I had four years of Latin and six years of Classical Greek in High School; then after, I went to a University that had a requirement in Classics. There, too, I had to take two years of Classical Greek and Latin. At the same time, both in High School and University, I studied English and French, using exactly the same techniques that were being used in the Greek and Latin classes.

The point is that what one needs to learn in Latin and Greek is precisely a low level of translation. There are no native speakers to communicate with. A dictionary, a grammar, and a little diligence will get one past most of the difficulties in working through a text. And that's what learning a language is still considered to be by many people.

During, and after the war, a revolution in language teaching was promised. It came out of the work of a linguist at the University of Chicago, Leonard Bloomfield, and some professors at the same University, notably Charles Fries and Robert Lallo, who brought together applied linguistics with behavioral psychology. The result was the audio-lingual or pattern practice method. In teaching foreign languages, there is now an impressive series of audio-lingual texts which are being used more and more widely in high schools and universities.

The name *audio-lingual* derives from one of the basic tenets of applied linguistics: that the spoken language is primary and the written language is merely a symbolical representation of the spoken language. Language students therefore should learn to understand (the audio part of audio-lingual) and speak (the lingual part) before they learn to read and write, contrary to the traditional method, where reading was everything.

Pattern practice, the alternative name for the method, describes it better, I think, in regard to linguistics, to learning theory, and to what actually takes place in the classroom.

In audio-lingual language teaching materials, the student is being conditioned to recognize and produce the sentence patterns by means of a number of exercises--substitution and transformation drills, for example--that present a stimulus and yield a response.

However, neither analytic linguistics nor behavioral psychology can provide an adequate approach to problems of language teaching. First of all, language is not a closed system with a definite and finite corpus of data which can be analyzed.

The definition of language which I prefer is one that I have borrowed from Noam Chomsky, the professor of linguistics at MIT, who in his turn borrowed it from the 19th Century linguist Humboldt. It is that language is a system of creating and understanding utterances which have never been spoken before. It is, in other words, a system which is unpredictable within certain limits, a system which works by a process of analogy.

In life, in real life, what gives our use of language form and substance is not a comparison with another language, or a self-contained analysis of a language, in terms of phonology, morphology and syntax, but rather the situational context, the reality that surrounds our utterances. In life, the situation and our reaction to it both guide and reduce our choice of responses to manageable proportions. This choice of response is one of the things which is simply not taught in most language classes, and is impossible to teach under behavioral principles. The dialogues which provide a setting for the pattern sentences do not seem to me to be reasonable substitutes for either life or language. They are always external to the student, as are the masses of mechanical drills in changing statements to questions and affirmative to negatives. All this material has two enormous advantages from the stand-point of a school administrator: it's easy to teach and it's easy to test. But does it really teach language, does it teach people to communicate?

On the other hand, language always functions as a tool of a total experience. We cannot effectively communicate by stringing together the little discrete bits as they are presented in the traditional method. The best way to learn a foreign language is similar to a child learning his own language. A four year old can express himself more fully, and with fewer errors, than a three-year old. But at no point is he trying to use just part of the language; he is trying to use all of it, and his success comes in what he has tried out and found out will work.

I recently came across a listing by E. V. Gatenby, a British linguist, of what he considers the ten steps by which a child absorbs his native language. They are:

(1) New names are learned in close association with the object, quality, or action named, or with pictures of them. There is nothing corresponding to the conveying of meaning through use of another language.

(2) The learning is through aural perception, not through visual symbols for sound.

(3) Common groups of sounds rather than single sounds remain in the memory to be treated as units of speech.

(4) Speech is learned to the accompaniment of physical, emotional, and some extent (as in story telling) mental activity. Such learning or mental impressions are unconscious: that is the child centers its attention on the *action*-its own, or that of others-not on the sounds that accompany it. The retention of the «sound effects» is effortless.

(5) Constant correction goes on.

(6) There is natural compulsion of necessity. The child must use language to satisfy its many wants.

(7) Nature supplies the maximum number of teachers and teaching equipment and devotes the maximum amount of time to her task.

(8) Constant revision.

(9) The whole process is full of variety and interest.

(10) Speech is only taught--not reading and writing.

It seems that there are many theories as far as teaching and learning foreign languages. Many dialogues that we use in our classes in which the student is role-playing are external to the student, but it is necessary to make language internal from the beginning. We must keep in mind, however, that the *first element* in learning a foreign language is to create an authentic communication. No matter how limited his capability, the student, from the first day, can say something real about what he is doing or seeing. The sense of accomplishment that this has

given our students has been a very important help in motivating them. Even those students who are studying because they have to rather than because they want to will be excited because they can say something that has meaning.

The *second element* is choice. Because the structures are not presented one by one, but always in clusters, the students always have to make a choice; but the choice is clearly visible and demonstrable.

The *third element* is analogy. It has already been indicated that the process both of learning a language and also of communicating in it is essentially one of analogy. Therefore, we set up situations which would be practiced with different items.

The *fourth element* is the conversational skill. Now in conversation the response is no longer to a visible or other sensory stimulus, but is instead usually to a linguistic stimulus. The use of language becomes more abstract and the range of choices becomes even wider. It has been discovered that in the normal range of conversation all the structures would be covered, and not just once, but over and over again, in a variety of different settings which is at least an approximation of life. The students are encouraged to come out with remarks for which they did not necessarily have all the linguistic parts. The role of the teacher is to prompt and to correct, to draw out the answers if it is possible.

The *fifth element* is reading and writing which always happened in traditional classrooms until student had reached the level labelled «advanced» and then the conversational element of the language usually happened in a discussion of a reading, if the teacher was skillful enough.

Our whole system tries to look at language--and language learning from different point-of-view: a teacher's point-of-view rather than a linguist's point-of-view one might say. Of course, it is not magic and there are problems implicit in it. One of these is that it requires a much *greater degree of teaching skill on the teacher*. What the present teachers are trying, I hope, is to produce fluency, and they must therefore be able to communicate with the students and be able also to involve them in conversation. Everything that happens in the classroom can be utilized for practicing the language, and teachers must be quick and creative to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves.

A system which involves real communication obviously works better with a small class than a large one. It has been discovered that the optimum class size is eight to ten students-- large enough for variety, but not too large to prevent anyone from having a chance to speak.

These are the things that the history of the teaching of foreign languages allows us to observe and which, at the same time, I myself have observed in all the years of my teaching career and I decided to do what I thought would be best suited for my students.

## II

### PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Education is an important part of any individual's life for it can shape and mold the individual's mind. Every student is educated in, by and for a particular society. What society is and what society wants are evident in the way society educates its young. The school, therefore, both retains the values of the society and attempts to improve upon them. Thus, the educational system being a part of the culture has two major functions: to be a mirror that reflects the society as it is, and at the same time, to be an agent of social change and a force directed toward implementing the ideals of society.

A foreign language in a school system is also a small part of a student's education, but yet a very important one, which aids the student to be more aware of different kinds of societies. It is a means and not an end in itself. It is a means of communication in order to gain an appreciation of another culture, understand their moral values and their way of thinking. A foreign language tries to foster the student's initiative and responsibility for recognizing different attitudes and opens up new fields of thought, in order that he can develop himself so that he can become an effective and broad-minded citizen.

A foreign language tries to teach the student not only to communicate with other ethnic groups but also to read critically, think effectively, discuss intelligently in the target language, to act wisely and to develop his unique talents and interests.

The foreign language teacher recognizes the responsibility for educating students about different cultures but at the same time he does keep in mind that the school is part of the community and it does reflect the existing community's structure, therefore, it allows and cooperates accordingly with different programs which bring young people and adults together to work on matters of common concern for the good of the student.

The foreign language teacher recognizes the different and many types of personalities, skills, and attitudes and, therefore, tries to present a variety of offerings to fit the needs of students to train them as specialists in the foreign language, to stimulate the gifted with advanced courses and high standards but also to help the less academically inclined by holding them to the same program.

Above all, the foreign language teacher recognizes and is most concerned with all the students' individual growth and awareness of ideas, in good work habits, in good relationship with others, in character development, and in recognition of real values.

### Objectives

#### I. To develop the student's intellectual powers:

- a. To help the student think logically, creatively, critically, and constructively in his own and in the target language.
- b. Aid the student to develop a positive set of values and understand different attitudes and sets of values of other societies.
- c. To provide opportunities and encouragement for acquisition of basic ideas, structure and methods of inquiry in foreign languages.
- d. To create situations where the student may express himself wholesomely in a foreign language.
- e. To encourage situations which encourage the individual's responsibilities in the learning process.

#### II. Goals:

1. The ability *to speak* the foreign language with fluency and correctness in various situations.
2. The ability *to read*, comprehend and appreciate literature, periodicals and articles written in a foreign language with understanding.
3. The ability *to write* compositions, letters, and reports with clarity and correct grammar structure.
4. To understand the foreign language as it is spoken by native speakers.

5. To provide skills and knowledge pertinent to travel experiences in foreign nations.
6. To recognize the major contributions of the target culture.
7. To understand and appreciate other people's way of life; patterns of foreign governments, economy problems in human relationships and the geographic cultural factors which breeds differences of attitudes.
8. To prepare oneself for a profession which requires the knowledge of foreign languages.
9. To provide a variety of work experiences: (a) foreign language clubs (b) student's teaching days (c) bulletin boards (d) working together for the cultural evening.

### III

## TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### TEACHING DIALOGUES

As a first step, both teacher and student have to accept the premise that each dialogue must be memorized and that such memorization must take place as prelude to everything else in the unit.

- STEPS:
- (A) The teacher breaks the dialogue into sentences or shorter segments, which students can grasp and imitate without referring to the textbook.
  - (B) The teacher gives the translation for the sentence or segments (so students will be acquainted with the meaning of the target phrases).
  - (C) The teacher recites the English (target) sentences or segment.
  - (D) The student repeats the English chorally, following precisely the pronunciation and intonation.
  - (E) If a long sentence has been broken up, after modeling each segment the teacher works up to a repetition of the entire sentence.

- (F) The teacher again recites the target sentence or segments. Individual students repeat a segment or combination of segments modeled by the teacher.
- (G) For listening comprehension and also to tune the students' ears to the flow of normal speed, the teacher should not hesitate to emphasize appropriate gestures that goes along with the dialogue in order to portray a vivid situation to the students.
- (H) To associate what they have learned orally with the written word, students may now open their textbooks and individual students may be called upon to read short portions of the dialogue.
- (I) The teacher assigns the dialogue, or portion presented, for memorization at home.

The teacher must explain that the difficult part of the target pronunciation is not producing the sounds but hearing them as they are. The teacher should also point out that a foreign language must be learned bit by bit and that trying to learn two weeks' work on the night before quizzes--simply will not work.

Finally when the students have learned five to six dialogues of the text, then they make their own dialogs since they know patterns and structure of the language.

## PATTERN DRILL

As each kind of pattern drill appears for the first time instructions in its use are given. The teacher should bear in mind the following points to conduct the drills MOST effectively.

1. The drills will go more easily and rapidly if students have thoroughly memorized the dialogues.
2. They should be done orally, with books and written material put away. If the students cannot remember a pattern well enough to give complete responses without looking at the book, they are not ready to put the grammar point into practice.
3. They should move fast. This is basic. The drills serve the purpose of developing automatic responses, not of tes-



ting the students' knowledge, and no time should be allowed for figuring out the answers.

4. Responses should always be in the form of full utterances except as otherwise indicated.
5. Drill sessions should not be interrupted by explanations of grammatical points or by students' questions. If a student fumbles during a drill, simply provide quickly the correct response and call for repetition.
6. Though the students' books are closed throughout the drill session, the teacher's book may be open. Nevertheless, the teacher's direction of the class will be much better if he uses not the book but a piece of paper or a card containing the necessary clues. In any case, the teacher's eyes should be on the class as much as possible.

## READING

Readings are based on material from preceding units; readings reinforce what has been learned and reward the students by giving them a chance to employ their newly acquired language ability to comprehend a story or anecdotes that they have not met before. In keeping with the audio-lingual focus, of course, they may be used for listening comprehension and for additional speaking practice. The teacher can read the selection to the students, whose books are closed, and then question them about what happens, asking them to retell the story if time permits. Or the reading may be used as an exercise in reading aloud; the teacher can model the pattern, expression by expression, and then ask for choral and individual repetition. It should be remembered that reading aloud is no easy task even in the mother tongue and that without a model the individual who is reciting may simply fill the ears of his fellow students with undesirable intonation patterns and pronunciation.

## QUIZZER AND EXAMS

Students are encouraged to use the language orally as much as possible, and without worrying too much about mistakes; but it is necessary to keep a very careful check on the progress each student makes, and to keep each student informed as to the result of his work. The first quiz

will necessarily consist only of a Dictation, a few questions asked orally in English-- answered in English (target). All the materials will of course be asked from dialogues.

For Exams: To recite the dialogue as oral exams, a question-answer drills, and fill in blanks.

## WRITTEN QORK

It is recommended that students begin to practice writing in English, French, German, etc. before the end of the first week. They copy dialogues. In this way they learn that the art of spelling is merely a means of recording a language.

## A WORD ABOUT TIMING

Experts agree that for success the dialogues should be done at a fairly rapid tempo.

1. It is much easier to avoid diphthongization of vowels and over - emphasis on consonants if a phrase is uttered quickly.
2. A class in which one student is allowed to ponder endlessly over a response that is obvious to other students becomes very tiresome.
3. If students are given time to break each utterance up into words, to translate each word into the mother tongue, to decide the proper response into the target, some of them will do so! Students of course have the habit of analyzing whatever they do not understand in their mother tongue; but while it is appropriate to analyze difficult passages, it is **BAD PRACTICE**.

## IV COURSE GUIDE

Level: Junior High School

Subject Area: English (French, Italian, German, ETC.)

### I. Philosophy

The Junior High School student who elects an English language course does so because he is interested and curious. These two elements are essential in the learning of English at this level. An attempt is made to study the needs and interests of these students, while making them aware of what language is and of what the learning of another language entails. Learning English must be exciting, fun and rewarding to the Junior high school student in order to maintain his interest.

The junior high school student studying the English language should come to realize that language is the essential expression of a people's behavior and outlook. He should also know that there are many cultures and many value systems in the world, and that it is a matter of serious importance to people of other cultures that we try to speak their language. The student should also acquire understanding and appreciation of another peoples' way of life.

Other areas of importance in the intent are the following: (1) The establishment of a meaningful relationship between the teacher and the student. (2) The use of extra-curricular means other than the textbooks (3) The classroom activities are conducted in English, as much as possible, and (4) The stress placed on as much oral participation as possible on the part of the student. Last but not least, the student should gain a great deal of satisfaction in the learning of the English language at this level.

### II. Instructional Objectives

The objectives of English teaching at this level are proficiency in language skills. The four skills to be developed in the study of English are: *Listening*, *Speaking*, *Reading*, and *Writing*.

#### Instructional Goals

##### A. Listening Comprehension:

The student will understand English as it is spoken by native speak-

ers in situations similar to his own experience. He will be able to understand conversations based on every-day situations, questions about his usual activities in and out of school, home situations, etc. all suited to his age level.

#### B. Speaking:

The student will speak English with reasonable fluency and correctness, and with an acceptable pronunciation by participating in simple dialogues based on daily life situations and answering questions about his usual activities. The student will be able to ask similar questions and to retell simple stories.

#### C. Reading:

The student will read the English language easily and without conscious translation. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the understanding of the material being read.

#### D. Writing:

The student will be able to write short stories, paragraphs and letters with clarity and correctness. He will be able to communicate in writing anything he can say, write simple dialogues and compositions dealing with his own experiences or with other topics that interest him.

### III. Selection and Organization of Subject Matter:

The content material to be worked on in the learning process of English at this level is composed in the following outline:

#### 1. The alphabet

- A. The pronunciation in English
- B. The practice by the students
- C. The use of simple words in English, drilling on the alphabet.

#### 2. The various sounds in English

- A. The pronunciation
- B. The practice with each other and the teacher
- C. The use of words common to the students comprising

the various sounds

- D. The intonation of the English language and its importance.

### 3. Daily terms commonly used by the students

- A. Basic terms (Good morning, good bye, thank you, etc.)  
B. Family terms--Food, days of the week, months, colors clothing, weather, time, etc.  
C. Conversations among the students using these common words.

### 4. Grammar

- A. Essential verbs (Have, Be, Do, etc.)  
B. Essential tenses (Present, Future, etc.)  
C. Basic grammar construction as seen in the dialogues.

e.g. *The sea is calm*

The - article (definite)

sea - noun

is - verb BE, third person singular

calm-adjective

### 5. Sentence Construction

- A. Individual student composing sentences on their own.  
B. Possible short stories  
C. Paragraph construction using terms understood at this level.

The procedures used in the teaching of English at this level with the aid of the basic textbooks and all other materials used consist of the modeling of all learnings by the teacher, the inactive use of Greek while English is being learned, the continuing training of the ear and tongue, the learning of structure through the practice of patterns of sound, order and form, rather than merely by explanation, and the minimizing of vocabulary until all common structures have been learned and understood.

*According to the four skills to be developed at the junior high school level the following activities could be used:*

As far as listening comprehension is concerned, the students will learn the various sounds in English through imitation and repetition. A word is said a few times by the teacher and the students repeat. The

pronunciation is checked by the teacher through listening to the students individually and in groups. If the students are listening properly they will repeat the word correctly.

This brings us into the speaking of these words. The students now try to use these words in sentences, speaking with each other and with the teacher. This promotes a better understanding of the material. One student may come to the front of the room and be questioned by his classmates. This brings about self-assurance and a feeling of satisfaction. An activity which is fun to the students is playing *Hangman*. One student comes up to the board and the rest of class guesses letters until the word is established. This also helps out a great deal in the area of spelling and is much more exciting to them than a spelling test.

Once listening and speaking are understood, the students will attempt reading the language. They compose their own sentences using the vocabulary they have had and read this to this class. Group work is fun for them in this area.

The last skill to be worked on is the writing of the language. A good way of learning this and enjoying it at the same time is board work. Four students go to the board and a word or sentence is given to them by a member of the class. The object of the activity is to write the words correctly. Students who make mistakes are helped by other students. It is all done in a friendly and helpful way so as not to bring about any frustration.

Many techniques and game-exercises can be used in the learning of English at this level. Most of these exercises are designed to have students speaking in small groups to help them get over their self-consciousness in speaking the foreign language and also to get to know everyone in the class.

The letters before each activity indicate how it might be used.

C	- Conversation	D	- Dialogue	G	- Game	Gr	- Grammar
I	- Introductions	N	- Numbers	P	- Pronunciation		
R	- Reading	S	- Songs	V	- Vocabulary		
VE	- Verbs	W	- Writing				

- I        1.    *Sharing of objectives*--each writes on a card and then passes around. Class discusses what the shared objectives are and how to meet them, i.e. speaking
- I        2.    *Paired introductions*--non-verbal conversation with one other whom you don't know too well for 3 minutes. Then

- person introduces his partner to the others. Teacher needs to demonstrate before starting.
- I, V 3. *New People Adjective Game*--Introduce yourself with an adjective. e. g. I'm happy. Maria. The next person introduces you and then him/herself, until the one who began reviews the whole circle or group. That's happy Maria, that's sleepy John, that's clever Tom, etc. This could be done later in the year or in the next one using new adjectives, to review old ones, etc.
- V 4. *Essences*--A guessing game using nouns and adjectives. If this person were a fruit what would he be? a color? a season? an animal?
- V 5. *Picture Concentration*--Teacher or group leader spreads out pictures pasted on cards all on the same theme, i. e. all women, all men, all children. The group has two minutes to study the pictures. The teacher then removes them, shuffles and removes several cards. The group must then describe the missing cards.
- C, V 6. *Categories*--Teacher puts a list of words on the board and asks the students in groups of two or three to put the words into three or four categories. The groups have 5 minutes and then must explain to others why they chose those words for those categories. Choose about 18 words from several different lessons or stories with no obvious relationship.
- G, 7. *Object Charades*--Played in two teams. Draw a card and be the object, i.e. refrigerator, washing machine, telephone, television.
- C 8. *Family at Dinner*--Give slips of paper with lines of dialogue. Four people are at dinner. Each has four slips of a paper and can only use these for conversation. Good chance to review dialogues/idiomatic expressions and rejoinders.
- W 9. *Write a Story*--Start a story. Each student can only say one word at a time. Teacher or student writes on the board. Make corrections, then give a group of students three minutes to stage the story.
- V, C 10. *Tell a Story* - Vocabulary cards are distributed to the

students, each has two or three. The students are asked to give the names of two people, a city, a season, a time of the day, what weather. Teacher draws these on the board, then a student starts the story using one of his vocabulary cards. The story continues about the suggested people, places, etc. until all the words are used. The person who started the story gives a résumé, then the group has five minutes to stage the story using props if necessary.

- C, V 11. *Airporty*-Take blocks or other props and set up an obstacle course. Others give directions, right, left, strait ahead. Planes cannot stop in air. Students can do by twos. Variation: Set up an obstacle course with tables, desks, chairs in the classroom. One student is blindfold and his partner must give him directions for reaching the other side of the room without touching any of the props. If anyone speaks in Greek he must go back.

The list with the techniques and game-exercises used in the classroom is really unlimited. Some more of the games worth mentioning are: *Bingo* (with words or numbers), *Concentration*, *The Dating Game*, *The Newlywed Game*, *Scrabble*, *Crossword*, *The Keyword Dating Game* (the second word of its title suggesting a method in itself of foreign language learning), etc. Some projects which are good to do are: menu making, map making, furnishing a house, a weather forecast, letter writing, etc. There are so many things which can be done in the teaching of the English language (any foreign language), especially at this level. Most students in the junior high school level are willing and eager to learn. It is extremely rewarding and encouraging to teach this type of student.

#### IV. *Evaluation*

In the teaching of the foreign language nearly everything the student does from the first day of class can be a means of evaluation. The various activities previously mentioned are good items for evaluation. When the students play games using English, their attitude and responses are valuable. Oral participation is of extreme importance in the learning process. A great deal of emphasis is placed on this aspect. When students are eager to learn and willing to perform, and ask questions, it is very important that the teacher take mental note of this.

After an area has been covered successfully, an excellent means of



evaluation can follow. A student volunteers to prepare a class on the material learned. He will be the teacher and is responsible for answering questions, etc. In this type of an evaluation both the student (teacher) and the class are evaluated.

Naturally work done in the language laboratory is evaluated. This gives the teacher a chance to listen to each student's pronunciation.

Some other types of written evaluation which are completely subjective are: paragraph construction, short stories, letter-writing, etc.

In all of the areas mentioned for evaluation, the four basic skills are involved. Students at this level must be able to perform all four of these within range of their individual aptitudes and abilities.

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